

RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP TO ASSIST LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND

County Demographics

Riverside County is the fastest growing county in the state and the state's sixth largest county in population. Nearly 320,000 students attend its 352 public schools, grades kindergarten through twelve, in the 23 districts located within the county's 7200 square miles. Of those students, 46.3% are Hispanic, 40.2 % white, 8.3% African-American, 2.2 % Asian, 1.3% Filipino, .8% American Indian, and .5% Pacific Islander. Almost 60,000 students (20% of the student population) are limited in their ability to speak English. These students come from homes in which more than 25 different languages are spoken, though the predominant language is Spanish for 94.8%.

Riverside County has a substantial percentage of emergency credentialed (14.4%) and first and second-year teachers (15.6 %).

Pre-existing Partnerships with Regional Providers

To serve the students of Riverside County, the Riverside County Office of Education works with its many partners in key endeavors at the state level, at the regional level, and at the local county level. Sample focused regional partnerships have included:

- The Gear Up Program with college and district members,
- Community Action Planning (150 education, government, non-profit, and community organization leaders),
- Regional Occupational Program with over 300 business partners,
- The Reading Task Force (representatives from county/city libraries, the prison system, school districts, colleges and universities, social services, health/medical professions, outreach programs, etc.),
- The Literacy Network (working with United Way, the libraries, Headstart/State Preschool, elementary and secondary curriculum leaders, GAIN, and child development programs at colleges),
- RIMS Region 10 Professional Development Center,
- RIMS Mathematics and Science Institute,
- Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center,
- Eight Southern California Counties Collaborative for Reading Success Network,
- California Technical Assistance Project,
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID),
- Riverside County Assessment Network,
- Riverside County Project Directors,
- School-to-Career,
- California School Leadership Academy
- Proposition 10 Commission,
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program with districts, colleges, and universities,
- Involvement in regional planning through the California Professional Development Institutes (Mathematics and Reading), Elementary Education Network, Instructional Materials Advisory Panel (for Reading/Language Arts Adoption), Inland Area Writing Project, California Mathematics Project, university advisement boards for administrative credentials, reading credentials/certificates, masters degree programs, etc.,
- Southern California Regional Reading Support Center,
- Princeton Review and Harcourt Educational Measurement Partnership
- College Grant
- County Achievement and External Evaluator Teams, and
- Professional development partnerships with San Diego County Office of Education and San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Office.

Barriers to Student Achievement/Success

Within low performing schools, there are sets of barriers to student achievement. These sets are made up of interrelated influences. The influences do not stand alone, but work with each other to produce a “way of doing things here.”

Barrier Set One: Unclear Expectations and Performance Standards for Reform

The first set has to do with leadership: district leadership, site leadership, and teacher leadership. Often the district “lays on” an outside evaluation of a school without clarifying its own set of performance standards with the principal and the evaluator. The principal, in turn, does not clearly define expectations for the “outside evaluator” with his staff, and they, in turn, with their students. In other words, the introductory layer to build a system for improvement is not in place—one that begins with clear performance expectations for all involved in an objective evaluation process—one built on a collaborative, sustained action model. The role of the “outside evaluator,” in relation to each party is not clear. The focus for improvement is not clear. And, as a result, all parties have not totally committed to an improvement process. Even in schools without outside evaluation teams, roles are not clear. The vision is incomplete. As the saying goes, “where there is no vision, the people perish,” both students and staff.

Barrier Set Two: Lack of Data, or Nonuse of Data, to Prompt and Guide Individuals in Affecting Systemic Change

Staffs may give different kinds of assessments, but often these assessments may not be:

- (1) **Student specific**--may not give or report out data about individual student performance. Assessments may be reported as, “Fifty percent of the students are not reading at grade level.”
- (2) **Specific enough**--may not give enough particular information about a skill that a student has not learned. Assessments may report out that the student is at the 45th percentile in reading comprehension, but may not specify the kind of comprehension (e.g. trouble with main ideas) or the type of reading material (e.g. recreational, informational, or functional).
- (3) **Ongoing**--may not show student progress toward a standard or goal. The assessment may not be given periodically to assess progress.
- (4) **Varied**--may not include projects, writing assignments, observations, presentations, etc. Assessments may be limited to one style or format that may not touch all student styles.
- (5) **Integrated**--may not be part of a system for evaluating critical student achievement. There may be large gaps or repetitions in assessment data.
- (6) **Scheduled**--may not be given at specified times during the year as a yardstick of grade level and school achievement. There may not be a “testing calendar.”
- (4) **Used for grouping**--may not be used to divide students into flexible instructional groups, particularly English Language Learners. The assessment may be given once and students grouped, if at all, on a one-time basis.
- (5) **Used for celebrations**--may not be used to celebrate individual student achievements frequently and consistently as students move toward achieving a standard or goal. Assessment may not be used for positive reinforcement of students.
- (6) **Used for staff conversations**--may not be the subject of teacher reflection. Assessments may not be used for targeting areas of particular student weakness or the need for supplemental materials.
- (7) **Used as feedback on teaching strategies**--may not be used to help teachers adjust their teaching. Assessments may only be used to reflect on students.
- (8) **Used to evaluate program effectiveness**--may not give useful information on whether a particular program is working. Assessments may not be used to evaluate the usefulness of keeping or discarding a set of materials or a purchased program.
- (9) **Used to leverage resources**, including ongoing, targeted professional development. Assessments may not be used as a way to focus on workshops, conferences, etc. that could help teachers learn new strategies for teaching difficult skills and concepts.

In other words, ongoing, systematic evaluation of student results is not the cornerstone for evaluating curriculum and instruction and supporting professional development opportunities.

Barrier Set Three: Low Expectations and Low Performance Standards for Staff and Students

High standards toward which all are striving--district, principal, staff, and students--are not part of a common culture with a common vocabulary. Students themselves are not clear about grade level standards--what they are expected to learn. Teachers are often teaching to below grade level standards. Teachers, principals, and district staff do not share a common set of understandings about learning and teaching. Standards-based lesson design is often unknown. Many teachers are new to the profession. Few professional development experiences--workshops, conferences, classroom observations, school visits, research findings, pivotal books--have been shared to build a learning community. Students do not share a "career ladder" of common academic experiences. Principal observations do not focus on the common goals across and within grade levels in an effort to bring focus to academic standards. Parents are not clear on expectations for student achievement. Standards are not guiding the culture; instead, the existing culture is being "fit into" the standards. And, as a result, the standards are another "add-on," rather than a steering mechanism. Staff has become proficient in the mundane. The system is stagnant. And, for the most part, people feel that variables affecting achievement are outside their control. This barrier set tends to hang onto the status quo, rather than notching schools up to higher expectations and achievement.

Barrier Set Four: Peripheral Curriculum and Instruction

In a low-performing school, there is often a sense of futility on the part of hard-working teachers. As a result, some teachers turn to what is immediately doable and concrete, such as workbook page fill-in sheets and short-answer assignments. Lesson plans often do not move students from that knowledge level to guided practice and challenging applications. Teachers rely on a narrow repertoire of strategies.

Because a low-performing school is not standards-driven, curricular expectations are not clear, and the textbook often becomes the curriculum, even though it may not be standards aligned or may not address critical standards. There is a need to align and articulate curriculum with the standards as well as within and across grade levels.

Teachers willing to try new curriculum and/or aligned practices often do not have specific assistance or support in applying the new strategies until they can reach confidence and competence. Teachers specifically need strategies for working with English Language Learners and for reteaching skills in a different way to those students who do not grasp them the first few times. Teachers need professional development opportunities, time to visit other classrooms, coaching, and time for discussion, reflection, and strategizing. Schoolwide and districtwide professional development plans, centered on narrowing the achievement gap for all students, are critical to creating a learning community and support for continuous improvement.

Intervention programs for low performing students, may be generic, rather than specific, to student skill needs. Intervention programs need to be engaged immediately for students in need of intensive care. They should have clear entry and exit criteria so students can loop in and out dependent on need. And, intervention programs, should be closely aligned to regular classroom standards.

Barrier Set Five: Not Knowing Where to Start and What to Do

Most underperforming schools are not that way because teachers do not care or do not work diligently. Nor are they that way because principals are not trying their best. They are the way they are because so many factors need to be addressed in a culture that is hanging onto habits or does not know how to dig out. There is a belief system in place, and a "way of doing things around here," that prevents "stepping out" onto a higher plane. And "stepping out" requires a plan--a new way of thinking about where to start and what to do first. That is the reason for an "outside evaluator" team to work in partnership with the school staff and district--a team that can bring a fresh vision and fresh approach to an old, persistent problem--lack of student achievement.

GOALS

It is the guiding purpose of this plan to develop a regional support system for districts and schools in their efforts to raise student achievement. This plan is based on the belief that many groups have resources to offer, that we need to work smarter, rather than harder, and that by focusing on a few targets, and bringing regional resources to bear on them, we can provide more efficient and effective service to districts.

This plan begins with the framework of the County Achievement Teams (CAT). The CAT process is a district-funded external review and ongoing support system for low performing schools. The power of the team lies in the members' cross-content, cross-grade level knowledge and experience and members' abilities to work with school teams. Team members have expertise in school leadership, assessment, reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, special education, and English language development. Team members are primarily staff of the Riverside County Office of Education, though outside specialists may join the team based on school need. CAT Teams are a regional service.

The CAT Team focuses on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Through document review, classroom observations, teacher surveys, interviews, and the development of a data-driven school profile, the team analyzes:

- Student groups who do not achieve,
- Areas of the tested curriculum on which students do not achieve,
- Classroom instructional practices and use of test data to guide instructional strategies,
- Use of research-based practices in the school,
- Materials matched to state curriculum,
- Articulation of curriculum and instructional practice,
- Programs for students who need catch-up interventions, and
- Leadership/management practices that focus the school on achievement.

The team presents their report of observations and recommendations to district and site leadership and staff, then works with the school to write an **action plan**. This is the end of the Phase I CAT Process with the site; however, the process does not end here.

In Phase II, the team continues in a collaborative relationship with the school for one to two more years, monitors progress toward achievement of action plan goals, and provides resource assistance through:

- Professional training for school leaders and teachers,
- Demonstration teaching in the classroom,
- Collaborative planning with grade level teams,
- Intensive literacy coaching from exemplary teachers, and
- Resources that can be funneled to these schools through education, community, business, and government partnerships.

From the framework of the CAT team school/district reports, and based on the desegregated data from each school profile, generic regional needs can be identified. It is the goal of this plan to:

- Define those generic needs,
- Engage site, district, and county level strategy teams,
- Build a system for addressing those needs, both at the district level and regionally,
- Identify resources to meet the needs, including model classrooms and model schools,
- Develop broad-based , ongoing support to these schools and districts, through professional development and coaching,
- Determine an evaluation plan to verify the outcomes of these efforts, and
- Share successes and challenges regionally.

Throughout the project, it is the goal of this plan to share this model, and what has been learned, through videos, training sessions, articles, and the Internet.

SOLUTIONS

Solutions to and Activities for Barrier Set One: Unclear Expectations and Performance Standards for Reform

When the arrangement is first made with a district office to begin work with a CAT Team, the process of setting expectations begins. Clear roles are established between the district, the principal, and the Team. A **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** is written to clarify the role of each and the goals for the Team.

Part of the MOU is based on a District and School Readiness Rubric. The Menu of Services to be provided to the district and school will vary depending upon the level at which the district and school enter the school reform process.

A **Principals'/Principles Leadership Institute** is a mandatory first-step for schools and districts signing on for the CAT process. All CAT schools would participate by sending a site team composed of the principal, a district office representative, a minimum of three site teacher leaders, and the external lead for that school's CAT Team. The Institute will:

- Clarify roles and commitments for the CAT process,
- Review research on performing schools,
- Build a common vocabulary for change,
- Visit a standards-based classroom (in actuality or on video),
- Participate in a case study of a model elementary, middle, and high school,
- Examine how assessment drives curriculum, instruction, and resource allocation (time, people, and materials),
- Develop a vision development process and conduct it at the school,
- Define the review and action planning process,
- Set up a 12-month calendar of action,
- Develop a plan for sharing the institute topics with the total school site staff, and
- Establish the Improving Schools Network for all participating CAT schools.

Dialogue sessions will be built around such resources as Richard DeFour's Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement, "Sand, Bricks, and Seeds: School Change Strategies and Readiness for Reform" by Robert E. Slavin, the "Immediate Intervention/Underperforming School Program First Year Overview" by The California Education Policy Seminar and The California State University Institute for Education Reform, the California School Leadership planning module, etc.

Participants will be given an **interactive notebook**. The notebook will be a tool for keeping and organizing information during the CAT process. Tabs will be keyed to the school report and action plan to be completed in Phase I of the CAT Process, as well as focus areas determined during the institute and identified by the school vision. Within each tab will be one or two kernel research articles or references to the topic. As the team continues in Phase II of the CAT Process, implementation strategies, assessment data, and personal reflections will be added to each tab. The notebook will culminate at the end of Phase I with the reporting of the action plan.

During the CAT process, both Phase I and Phase II, each CAT school will be given access to a central website called the **Website Challenge and Success Bulletin Board/Research Link**. Teams will share successes, challenges, questions and answers, and link to current relative research via the website. This website will also continue to provide focus questions, new research on action plan topics, and suggestions for keeping the school plan in the forefront of daily action. It will be a link for all statewide efforts for intervention reform processes similar to CAT.

At the end of the Principal's/Principles Leadership Institute, the attending site team will lead a **vision development** session at their school. The vision statement will be built upon the research findings for performing schools and dialogue sessions at the Institute. This vision statement--part of DeFour's plan for reshaping schools into learning communities--will help set the school's focus on increasing student achievement.

After the vision statement is written, a planning session will be held with the Site Team--lead teachers, principal, and CAT Lead. The session will define the elements in the vision statement that will be the centerpiece of the

schoolwide CAT observation, review, and recommendation process.

A CAT **process manual** details the steps in the review and reform planning process so all involved groups are acting from the same set of assumptions and expectations. **Journal entries** by the CAT Lead will keep district, principal, and site leaders in a communication loop as process steps are engaged in and completed. The Website Challenge and Success Bulletin Board/Research Link will also serve as an ongoing communication tool. In addition, CAT Leads meet twice a month to talk about progress at participating CAT schools and districts.

Solutions to and Activities for Barrier Set Two: Lack of Data, or Nonuse of Data, to Prompt and Guide Individuals in Affecting Systemic Change

Traditionally, schools, particularly low-performing schools, have not had access to data from multiple assessment sources, or used this data to guide management and instructional decisions. **Three CAT assessment coordinators** are housed in each region of the county: desert, south county, and Greater Riverside. They provide Phase I schools and their districts a **school profile** of demographic and desegregated outcome data, mainly based on SAT9/STAR and API information. This profile--along with the document review, classroom observations, meetings with the site team, interviews with staff and constituents, and the teacher survey--form the basis of recommendations in the **CAT school report**.

If schools are using other multiple measures that are in a database, these can be used in conjunction with the SAT9/STAR/API data to make schoolwide conclusions.

Schools entering Phase II CAT involvement step up to another level of data usage: how to use student specific assessment data, how to create classroom assessments tied to standards through backward design, how to group students for instruction in flexible groupings, how to develop grade level and schoolwide benchmark assessments, how to use student work for evaluation of teaching strategies. This component is offered through a ten-module training called “**Assessment in Action**.” Schools can enter at any module, depending on their teacher needs (as determined by the teacher survey, the readiness rubric, and the school report) and participate in one, a combination of, or all modules.

In addition, the CAT assessment coordinators are able to work with CAT schools to interpret data to leverage resources, evaluate specific program effectiveness, and develop a district/school-testing schedule. The assessment coordinators also cultivate partnerships in order to bring new data sources into schools. As an example, through a partnership between Harcourt Educational Measurement and the Riverside County Office of Education, pilot CAT schools are being provided Stanford Diagnostic Reading and Mathematics Tests and the Stanford On-line Writing Assessment. Pilot schools can specify narrative, descriptive, persuasive, or technical writing to correlate with the state writing assessments at grades four and seven, as well as the High School Exit Exam.

Through the establishment of the **Improving Schools Network**, Phase I and II schools and districts will share their plans, challenge areas, solutions, and strategies in all barrier areas. These meetings will be held in each region of the county--the desert, south county, and the Greater Riverside area--with CAT leads and their member schools and districts. Breakout sessions are held for elementary, middle schools, and high schools. Assessment issues will be central to these meetings, as they are in the Riverside Assessment Network already in existence for CAT and non-CAT schools and districts within the region. Emphasis at these network meetings will be on locally developed assessment tools. The Improving Schools Network will provide a vehicle to assist with solutions to Barrier Set Three by identifying similar professional development needs for schools and districts related to vision and action plan focus areas. These, then, can be offered more cost effectively through the Riverside County Office of Education as the regional provider.

Another facet of Phase II is the **monitoring** of the action plan for improvement developed in Phase I. The CAT Team, in collaboration with the site team, regularly monitors the plan and makes revisits to classrooms and schools. Student work samples, locally developed assessments, and achievement data form the basis for evaluation of action plan components. Grade level and staff agendas are also part of the evaluation process. CAT Team members emphasize with district and site leadership the need to structure time for teachers to meet and reflect on practice,

encouraging this as a key component of the school's action plan.

Through Phase I interviews and document review, the CAT Team will give each school and district a “**Matrix of Existing Regional Services.**” This matrix will bring together, in a comprehensive view, all county office and RIMS Region 10 services and programs *already being provided* to the school. This overview will help prevent duplication or conflict with vision focus areas or action plan goals. Major district and school programs—including core and intervention programs that relate to the main academic areas—will be added to this matrix as appropriate.

Part of the student performance problem is that many unconnected programs, funded from multiple funding streams, reside at a school site and the district. Through data, schools can evaluate the efficacy of these programs in achieving their vision and action plan goals, giving them solid information upon which to found decisions for organized abandonment or program enhancement from both the district and site levels. Since all information is shared on an ongoing basis with the school's district representation, as well as staff, these actions have more potential. If all major efforts are aligned with the core improvement areas identified in the vision and the action plan, there is a greater possibility of achieving the targets in those areas.

Solutions to and Activities for Barrier Set Three: Low Expectations and Low Performance Standards for Staff and Students and

Solutions to and Activities for Barrier Set Four: Peripheral Curriculum and Instruction

Staff at underperforming schools, and from districts, enter the reform process at different readiness levels. The CAT and site team administers the **teacher survey** to the school in Phase I. The general results of this survey informs the collaborative team on the following issues: (1) district leadership on standards, assessment, and research-based practices, (2) teacher familiarity and use of standards, assessment, and research-based practices, (3) school instructional leadership, and (4) resources aligned to state standards, assessments, and research-based practices.

Classroom observations and interviews, during Phase I indicate the strategy repertoires of teachers, their knowledge of standards-based lesson design, school-wide implementations, and prior professional development.

Based on these indicators, the focus areas of the site vision statements, action plan goals, district surveys of professional development needs, and input from the Improving Schools Network, the Riverside County Office of Education will develop a “**Menu of Services**” tailored to the needs of these low performing schools. The Menu of Services is a list of professional development opportunities—speakers, consultants, conferences, etc.—brokered or developed to meet district/school needs.

Part of the Menu of Services will include a series of **Content and Leadership Modules**, using the design of Assessment in Action (mentioned earlier). There will be a series of five major training topics: (1) Reading, (2) Writing, Listening, and Speaking, (3) Mathematics, (4) Curriculum Articulation and Alignment, and (5) Classroom Management. These topics will be tailored to K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12 as needed. A school can enter any module, depending on their prior professional development and current practice. Most topics will have several modules. A team or staff could begin at the beginning and take all modules, take one, or several. Modules will be short enough to deliver in one to two-hour segments. Each module will be guided by standards and assessment and model the concept of standards-based lesson design.

The rest of the Menu of Services will be a list of offerings by universities, colleges, the Riverside County Office of Education, joint ventures by two or more county offices, or through business/organizational partnerships to provide needed services. Topics will be targeted to vision focus areas and action plan goals, with concentration on reading/language arts and mathematics through the grades and content areas. For example, student test preparation will be offered both by Princeton Review and by a consultant hired by RCOE to provide this service to CAT schools. Content literacy will be a two-county effort between San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools and RCOE to form cross-content teams at middle and high schools in both counties. The featured leader of this effort will be Kate Kinsella. Special courses, through the University of California, Riverside, will be tailored to fit district and combined school needs. Other high priority needs include offerings on differentiated instruction and flexible grouping within the classroom, as well as working with English language learners as they move into the English

Language Arts Standards.

In addition to the wide offerings listed on the Menu of Services, five pilot schools will have **literacy coaches**. The literacy coaches have been trained in a two-day session through a joint effort by the University of California, Riverside, and RCOE, and will meet four times a year for further training and to share successes, strategize, and review research and resources. The literacy coaches will work in teams at the five pilot schools--three elementary, one middle, and one high school--to provide demonstration teaching, analyze student work with teachers, and coach site teachers as they implement teaching strategies to meet their action plan goals. Some of their work will be filmed in "video visits" to use in modeling work for other CAT schools and for the Success Conference and State Training Academy.

After each site visit, the literacy coaches will submit a school report to the literacy coach coordinator (a CAT Team member and lead), the district office representative, and the principal as part of the ongoing journaling process for effective communication. Teachers who are working with the literacy coach will be asked to fill out a simple evaluation answering four questions: (1) what I learned from the literacy coach, (2) how I have used it, (3) what student achievement results I can show from using the strategy, and (4) what I still need. Between the quarterly meetings, the literacy coaches will also communicate regularly with the trainers, coordinator, CAT lead, and each other via their intranet website.

CAT Team members will continually identify model lessons and experiences, model **classrooms and schools**, resources, and effective intervention programs to share with CAT districts and schools via the Website Challenge and Success Bulletin Board/ Research Link, at the Improving Schools Network meetings, and through action plan monitoring meetings. CAT Team members will meet with grade level teams or departments, whenever possible, to assist with articulation of action plan goals within and across grade levels and departments.

Finally, RCOE will inaugurate a **Riverside County K-12 Academy for Teaching and Learning Reading and the Language Arts**. Appointment to the prestigious Academy will be through application. The application will call for the submission of a standards-based lesson or learning experience with necessary component parts (the standard addressed, objective, links to previous student learning, how the lesson or experience is introduced, procedures, time required, resources required, how different learners can be accommodated, assessment plan, next steps, possible links to future learnings, and reflections). Only 25 lessons or learning experiences at K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12 levels will be selected by a juried panel. Lesson plans will be judged on their ability to move students from basic skill memorization and understanding through challenging application levels. Authors of the lessons will be appointed to the academy. The top lessons from these lessons, illustrating grade articulation through a framework strand, will be videotaped and used for professional development. Authors of the lessons will also be invited to present at workshops and conferences, including the Success Conference.

Through all efforts, the guiding documents will be the school vision statement and the action plan. Every activity will be evaluated as to whether and how it furthers these two directions. Continuous assessment--through analysis of student work and test results--will determine the success of all these interrelated efforts to improve teaching and learning, district and school interactions, and regional support.

Solutions to and Activities for Barrier Five: Not Knowing Where to Start and What to Do

Throughout the CAT review and improvement process, district, site team, school staff, and regional consultants work collaboratively on priorities and direction for schoolwide systemic reform. This begins with the Memorandum of Understanding and Principals'/Principles' Leadership Institute, and continues through vision setting, establishing a calendar for action, and creating an action plan based on a school profile and recommendations from the schoolwide review. A common vocabulary (built around the CAT review process manual, research-based practices, model classrooms and schools, as well as standards and assessment) will be used in the Institute and throughout Phase I, helping to build a culture for change and improvement. Consistent and continuing communication through the interactive notebook, the Website Challenge and Success Bulletin Board/Research Link, quarterly meetings of the Improving Schools Network, and the Literacy Coach intranet site will keep all partners informed and contributing. The Academy for Teaching and Learning Reading and the Language Arts will model standards-based lesson design.

The Menu of Services will continue to provide ways of knowing “what to do”--through professional development and model intervention program ideas. Assessment strategies continue to use student work and assessment results as “reality checks” on whether the starting point and the continuing pathways for improvement are effective.

Throughout this process, the district will advocate for the school to combine multiple funding streams to create cohesive and innovative programs. In cooperation with the CAT Team, the district will serve the school by seeking out and sharing information about effective programs and strategies to fill school needs.

The culminating event of the regional partnership--the **Success Conference/State Training Academy**--will be a two-day event. This will expand existing dissemination efforts (visits by counties interested in the model, conference awareness sessions, and the recent inaugural two-day statewide training) to help other regional partnerships to answer the question: “Where do we start and what do we do?” It will also help participating CAT districts and schools to bring closure to a year of successes and challenges. Successes can be both processes and products. Both will be based on evidence of increased student achievement to illustrate another “data principle”--that assessment data can and should be used to provide the basis for celebrations of academic achievement.

Day One will be the Success Conference. CAT district, school, and regional staff will share successful action plan goals. Panels and individual presentations on strategies, processes, and programs will be shared with veteran CAT schools and with schools and regional providers considering the move to this kind of improvement process. Day Two will move into the State Training Academy with sessions detailing each project and process described in this proposal—the “how we did it” program.

Not all these structures are currently in place. Funds from this grant would be used to develop or expand the following components: the Principals/Principles Leadership Institute, Vision Development, some professional development opportunities on the Menu of Services to Low Performing Schools, the Improving Schools Network, the identification of model schools and classrooms, the Interactive Notebook, the Literacy Coach Project, development of the five Content and Leadership Modules, the K-12 Academy for Teaching and Learning Reading and the Language Arts, and the Success Conference/State Training Academy. The Riverside County Office of Education, in cooperation with the districts it serves, will contribute/and or coordinate all other resources to implement the processes and projects of this regional effort.

Phase I and II of the CAT process are largely funded by contract with the districts. The above new critical components will be sustained in the future through cost recovery workshops or by seeking additional funding from other sources. The major financial investment in these components is in their development. The development costs will already have been covered by this grant award. Residual costs would entail reprinting or updating. It is hoped that, after value is added to and results shown for some of the professional development opportunities enabled by this grant funding, that districts will be willing to join together to fund future major speakers and/or consultants. As districts continue to be involved in these processes and programs, it is the goal of RCOE to constantly build district capacity until they become integral to the district itself.

We know that the need for these services is critical, and that districts have committed to use them. The challenge remains to develop the support materials and structures to sustain the efforts will make a difference in student achievement. Funding from this grant will enable Riverside County Office of Education, as a regional provider and partner, to work with districts and schools to affect significant improvements in student achievement in core academic areas.